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Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

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Friday, 8 August 2008, 1.15 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Grauls	(Belgium)
Members:	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Georgia

Letter dated 7 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/533)

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08-45458 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 1.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Georgia

Letter dated 7 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/533)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Georgia in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Alasania (Georgia) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in response to a letter dated 7 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, contained in document S/2008/533.

I should like to draw the attention of members to two letters dated 7 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia, which will be issued as documents of the Security Council under the symbols S/2008/534 and S/2008/535.

I call now on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation took the initiative of calling for this emergency meeting of the Security Council because of the alarming situation in South Ossetia, which has been brought about by the blatant and aggressive actions of the Georgian armed forces against that republic, which is an internationally recognized party to the conflict.

During the night of 8 August 2008 local time, literally just a few hours after reaching an agreement on holding negotiations to resolve the escalation in the South Ossetian conflict, Georgian military divisions began a treacherous and massive attack against Tskhinvali. The military option was used by the Georgian authorities despite all the diplomatic efforts that had been undertaken in contacts between Moscow, Tbilisi, Tskhinvali, Washington and other interested capitals.

The Russian Federation has recently and repeatedly warned members of the Council of a likely escalation in the situation. We warned Council members that the Georgian authorities had augmented their offensive forces. Indeed, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe warned of growing militarization in Georgia, as seen in the alarming build-up of the Georgian armed forces. Our warnings were ignored, and the Council is obliged today not only to deal with a resurgence in the conflict but to discuss a situation that represents a threat to regional security and peace.

Because of Georgia's actions, the situation in the conflict zone has now reached a critical phase. Massive artillery fire is being directed against a peaceful civilian population, including old people and children, using Grad multiple launch systems and large-calibre rocket launchers. Shooting is taking place in the centre of the capital of South Ossetia, where dozens of houses are engulfed in flames. According to available information, at 3 a.m. local time, Georgian tanks and infantry began to attack the southern parts of Tskhinvali.

Such policies of the Georgian authorities dramatically contravene the hopes that Tbilisi was promoting. We can already say with certainty that the aggressive acts ordered by the Georgian authorities have done great damage to the peace process and to the prospects of achieving a political or diplomatic settlement. Tbilisi is trying to create a smokescreen around its acts by both blaming the Russian Federation, including Russian television channels, for everything, and talking about peace, in sharp contrast with its actual conduct.

The Georgian military are being more frank about events. A few hours ago, General Mamuka Kurashvili, commander of the peacekeeping contingent of the Georgian armed forces in Georgia, announced in front

of the television cameras that the decision had been taken in Tbilisi to restore constitutional order in South Ossetia — that is, to resolve a long-standing conflict by military means. Even Georgian politicians have let the cat out of the bag: Temur Yakobashvili, State Minister for Reintegration, has said that the goal of his leaders was to put an end to the regime in Tskhinvali.

As a result of all those actions, Tbilisi has totally destroyed the credibility of the Georgian leadership as a responsible party to the negotiating process and, in general, as a member of the international community guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

It is now quite understandable why Tbilisi has, for a long period of time and using many pretexts, stubbornly refused to reach an agreement with South Ossetia and Abkhazia on the non-use of force. Members of the Security Council will recall that that has been the principal element in many Council resolutions. The Russian Federation has insisted on that and will continue to do so. Since the current flare-up of the conflict began, the Russian Federation has done everything possible to de-escalate it. We have sent a special representative of our Minister for Foreign Affairs to the region, and we are using all available leverage to exert positive pressure.

The Security Council must now play its role. We are convinced that the Council must immediately call for an end to the hostilities and for a rejection of the use of force. The Council and the international community as a whole cannot remain on the sidelines at this difficult moment, when the fate of the hundreds of thousands of people living in the region is being decided. Together, we must put an end to the violence, which has serious implications for regional and international security.

There is still time to avoid further casualties, including among the civilian population. The Georgian leadership must reflect and must return to civilized means of resolving difficult issues related to a political settlement. The Russian Federation will continue its efforts to prevent any further bloodshed and to put the situation in South Ossetia back on a peaceful track.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): Let me express my gratitude to the members of the Security Council for this opportunity to address them. Today's special Council meeting is being held to consider the grave escalation of the situation in the Tskhinvali region of Georgia. First, I will reflect on the recent events that have led to that tragic deterioration.

On 1 August, at about 8 a.m. Tbilisi time, a pickup vehicle containing six Georgian police officers was hit by two remote-control explosive devices. As a result of that attack, five Georgian policemen were severely wounded. The central authorities decided not to retaliate, so as not to escalate the situation.

On 2 August, six civilians and one Georgian policeman were injured during the overnight shelling of seven Georgian villages in the South Ossetian conflict zone. The seven Georgian-controlled villages came under intense fire from South Ossetian separatists using large-calibre mortars. Georgian law-enforcement personnel fired back defensively for some time but then received a ceasefire order aimed at not escalating the situation.

On 3 August, the South Ossetian separatist government announced the evacuation of more than 500 people, including 400 children. However, the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia's Republic of North Ossetia told the Interfax news agency that it was not an evacuation; the children were being sent to North Ossetia as part of a prearranged summer camp programme, as he explained it. Russian media outlets started a massive propaganda campaign against Georgia.

Late on 6 August, separatists opened fire with mortars on Georgian-populated villages: Eredvi and four others. Georgian Government forces fired back to defend the civilian population. As a result of intense crossfire during the night, two servicemen belonging to the Georgian battalion of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces were injured. The separatist regime also claimed several injuries on its side. Despite the targeted attacks on the peaceful population and villages, as well as on the Georgian police and peacekeeping forces, the central authorities decided not to respond with a heavy exchange of fire, in order not to injure the local population.

Temur Yakobashvili, Georgian chief negotiator and State Minister for Reintegration, said in late-night televised remarks on 6 August that it was the position of the Georgian Government that only direct dialogue with the Tskhinvali authorities would resolve the

deteriorating security situation. Mr. Yakobashvili also stressed that Ambassador-at-Large Yuri Popov would attend the talks as a facilitator. South Ossetian chief negotiator Boris Chochiev refused to take part in the negotiations.

Overnight and in the early-morning hours of 7 August, intensive fire came from four positions in various Ossetian villages. The separatist authorities continued firing on Georgian law-enforcement personnel and peacekeeping units with mortars and artillery. The central authorities responded with limited fire in order to defend those positions.

In a morning interview with Russian news agencies, South Ossetian de facto President Eduard Kokoity declared that, if the Georgian Government did not withdraw its military forces from the region, he would start to clean them out. President Saakashvili, speaking with journalists at the military hospital in Gori, where he was visiting injured Georgian servicemen, said that, despite the attacks on the Georgian villages, Tbilisi was showing maximum restraint. The President also called on Russia to recall from South Ossetia its officials, who consider themselves the so-called South Ossetian government.

On the morning of 7 August, Temur Yakobashvili visited the conflict zone to meet with representatives of the separatist government. The Minister of State met with Marat Kulakhmetov, Commander of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces, in Tskhinvali. Once again, however, the separatists refused to negotiate with him. Anatoly Barankevich, head of the separatist republic's Security Council, threatened that armed groups of Cossacks from North Ossetia were headed towards South Ossetia to fight Georgian forces.

By 4 p.m. the same day, the separatists had resumed their shelling of Georgian villages. Three Georgian servicemen were injured when the South Ossetian separatist forces blew up an infantry combat vehicle belonging to the Georgian peacekeeping battalion. Georgian police responded by firing towards groups of armed separatists in those villages, killing two separatist militiamen and wounding two others. Later, the Georgian peacekeepers' checkpoint at Avnevi was bombed, and several Georgian servicemen and civilians were killed.

In a live televised address at 7.10 p.m., President Saakashvili said that he had ordered the Georgian forces to cease fire in South Ossetia. He stated that there had been casualties, including both deaths and injuries. Mr. Saakashvili said that he had ordered the ceasefire specifically to give the South Ossetian secessionist regime another opportunity to resume the talks. Despite Georgia's decision not to return fire, the Georgian village of Avnevi once again came under fire from South Ossetian militiamen at approximately 8.30 p.m. The village can be described as having been totally destroyed as a result of that attack.

South Ossetian separatist armed groups fired at the Georgian-controlled village of Prisi at about 10.30 last night. The attack left several people wounded on the Georgian side. At approximately 11.30 p.m., the same separatist authorities opened fire on all Georgian positions around the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali, including those in the villages of Tamarasheni and Kurta. The police station in Kurta was totally destroyed as a result of that heavy fire.

I want to state very clearly that the illegal separatist authorities and armed formations are under the control and direction of the security and defence agencies of the Russian Federation. Numerous high-ranking Russian officers from among the ranks of the peacekeepers, as well as other officials from the Russian military, intelligence, and law-enforcement services, are serving in senior roles in Tskhinvali.

That is a clear violation of Russia's obligation to remain neutral: instead, it has thus become a party to the conflict. These Russian officers and individuals include: Mr. Yuri Morozov, the Prime Minister, born in the Russian Federation, who, before his appointment in the government of South Ossetia in 2005, occupied various positions in Bashkiria; Mikhail Minzayev, Minister for Internal Affairs since 2005, a colonel in the Russian police, who, in 2004, during the counter-terrorist operation in Beslan, led FSB Special Unit Alpha; Anatoly Barankevich, Secretary of the National Security Council of South Ossetia since 2006 and a colonel in the Russian military forces, who participated in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and in both Chechen wars; Boris Attoyev, Chairman since 2006 of the Committee for State Security, analogue of the KGB, who previously held various positions in the Soviet KGB and who after the completing his mission in Afghanistan was appointed to the central apparatus of the FSB in Moscow; Vasily Lunev, Minister for Defence of South Ossetia since March 2008, a general in the Russian army; Vladimir Kotoyev, head of the Government Protection Service since 2007, a colonel

in the Russian army, who participated in the Chechen and Bosnian wars; and Oleg Chebotariev, head of the State Border Protection Services since 2005, a colonel in the Russian FSB. Those individuals were granted impunity by the Russian Federation from being held responsible for atrocities that they have been committing.

The Government's military action was taken in self-defence after repeated armed provocations and with the sole goal of protecting the civilian population and preventing further loss of life among residents of various ethnic backgrounds. We believe that every democratic State would have reacted in a similar fashion to protect its own citizens. The Government acted because the separatists not only defied the ceasefire but sharply escalated the violence, killing several peacekeepers and civilians within hours of the ceasefire.

Additional illegal forces and military equipment were and are entering Georgian territory from Russia through the Roki tunnel, threatening even worse violence. The separatists have also been continuing to threaten to attack other parts of the country outside the South Ossetian region, allegedly with the foreign assistance that is flowing into that region. Russian peacekeepers told Georgian officials that they were unable to control the separatists. The security situation was deteriorating and violence wais increasing rapidly. The separatists were not heeding any appeal for direct talks.

Georgia seeks a negotiated solution to the conflict, with international engagement. Our offer of autonomy in line with European standards stands, with international guarantees including an elected regional parliament, an elected regional president, shared sovereignty and the protection of South Ossetian identity, culture and language, still on the table. Until such a solution is agreed, the region, we think, should be governed by the elected head of the South Ossetian administration, Dmitry Sanakoev, an ethnic Ossetian and former separatist leader.

We invite Russia to be constructively engaged in the economic rehabilitation of the region as well as to contribute to the agreed security arrangements there. The Government's immediate goal at this point is to restore peace, to facilitate the return to normal life for all residents of the region and to allow the return of the refugees and internally displaced persons. We stand ready to ensure adequate supplies of water, electricity, food, emergency services, medical care and shelter. Separatist rebels will be eligible for amnesty. Humanitarian organizations will have access to the region, and the Georgian Government has already allocated funding totalling €2 million for the immediate humanitarian and emergency needs of the region.

According to verified reports, as we speak, a huge contingent of military personnel and equipment is illegally entering Georgia's sovereign territory through the Roki tunnel. The Russian Federation's Republic of North Ossetia has declared the mobilization of armed mercenaries to be sent to Georgia. There are disturbing signs that we are facing a calculated provocation for the purposes of escalating the situation in order to justify a pre-planned military intervention from the Russian side.

We therefore demand that the Russian Federation prevent the transit of armed mercenaries to Georgia, exercise its influence over the separatist regime to stop attacks on the civilian population and start negotiations.

As in my last address to this forum, I want to reiterate Georgia's call to the international community to explicitly condemn the continuing infringements of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian Federation. Despite this most recent escalation, I want to emphasize that the Georgian Government once again calls for, and is showing its readiness to immediately begin, peace talks aimed at resolving the conflict in South Ossetia and calls on the separatist rebels to cease their military actions and come to the negotiating table.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to take the floor.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): Before we came into this Chamber, members of the Council met in the Consultations Room. We regret that it has not yet been possible to agree on a Security Council statement on this issue. We hope that it will be possible in the days to come. But the absence of a statement tonight should not be taken as a sign that the Security Council is not engaged on this issue and is unconcerned about the direction that events are taking. On the contrary, this is a grave matter, and it is one that threatens stability and security in the region.

I would like to use this opportunity to express our serious concern at the escalation of violence in South Ossetia, Georgia. I would like to take the opportunity to call for the immediate cessation of hostilities and take the opportunity also to call on the parties to immediately resume negotiations.

We have been concerned to hear about reports of troops and other armed personnel from outside Georgia and South Ossetia moving into the region, and the United Kingdom calls on all actors in the region, whether they are State or non-State actors, not to escalate tensions and to exercise the utmost restraint at this time.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having brought the situation in South Ossetia, Georgia, to the attention of the Council at the request of the Russian Federation and of Georgia. A clear threat to peace and security is posed, and we are particularly concerned at the risk of an escalation of violence. Under these circumstances, it is legitimate and urgent that our Council should be seized of the matter. We hope that, to the greatest extent possible, the Security Council will be able to rapidly speak with one voice on the situation. France is alarmed by the serious incidents that are taking place, all the more so because in this situation of confusion the information we have indicates numerous victims on both sides.

What is certain is that for all the parties to the conflict the military option offers no way out. France therefore calls on the parties and on all those who have a decisive influence on them, first of all, immediately to cease hostilities on the ground; secondly, immediately to resume dialogue, with a view to a ceasefire by which each party must make all of its forces abide; and finally, to cooperate fully with the mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). France fully supports the search for a political solution, with respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

To conclude, I would like to recall that France currently holds the presidency of the European Union, as Council members know. The European Union very recently recalled that it was determined to spare no effort in helping the parties to attain a lasting solution.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): The United States, too, is seriously concerned by the escalation of violence in South Ossetia, Georgia. We appeal to all parties involved in this quickly changing situation to step back and to order their forces to disengage. We can conceive of no circumstances that warrant a continuation of the violence. We can accept no excuses from any party that refuses to disengage, and we assure all parties that we will value restraint and condemn aggression.

My Government has been working closely with the Russian Government in recent days in an attempt to de-escalate this situation. We welcome the cooperation of Tbilisi and Moscow earlier today in establishing a ceasefire and setting up a direct meeting of Georgian officials and South Ossetian representatives. We condemn the South Ossetians' refusal to attend this meeting or to honour the ceasefire.

We call on all parties to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Georgia. We also call on Russia to pull its troops back and not to inflame the situation by sending its forces to Georgia. Russia must cease the transport of troops and equipment through the Roki tunnel from Russia into South Ossetia. In the days ahead it is essential that the parties agree to measures to restore stability and to rejuvenate the peace process.

Mr. La Yifan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I welcome the representative of Georgia to this meeting. The current situation in South Ossetia, Georgia, is deeply worrisome. China is gravely concerned about the military conflict and about the escalation of the conflict in the region. The first imperative is to cease hostilities and, at the same time, to exercise restraint and avoid any action that may lead to an escalation of tension and harm regional peace and stability.

On 31 October 2007, at its sixty-second session, the General Assembly unanimously adopted its resolution 62/4, which relates to the Olympic Truce during this year's Olympic Games. In a few hours, the XXIX summer Olympics will be opening in Beijing. China shares the Secretary-General's wish for the parties concerned to comply with the Olympic Truce resolution. The Security Council and the international community should encourage the parties to cease the hostilities without delay, resume dialogue and make determined efforts to resolve their dispute in a peaceful manner.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): We are extremely concerned at the escalation of violence in the region of

South Ossetia, Georgia. It is particular sad to face such a scenario while in Beijing in a few hours the Olympic Games will be declared open. Once again, all the calls for a universal Olympic Truce, issued by our world body, are being blatantly ignored. Even though this conflict does not appear on the Council's agenda, we cannot dismiss our responsibilities vis-à-vis a situation that could further deteriorate and affect the stability of the entire region.

Echoing the appeals made to the parties today by the Secretary-General, by the presidency of the European Union (EU) and by the EU High Representative, we affirm that violence must immediately give way to dialogue and negotiations. The first important step is to restore the situation on the ground that existed before. Any actor who is in a position to advise the parties should exert all his influence to inspire moderation and restraint. We still see a key role for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the settlement of the conflict, but for the OSCE to play that role, weapons should first be put down and the sides should immediately resume direct talks. The latest events further demonstrate that the current situation in the conflict areas of the region is simply unsustainable.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): Viet Nam is deeply concerned about the situation in the area of conflict of South Ossetia as tensions in the region are rising. We especially regret last week's and other incidents, which led to numerous fatalities, injuries and displacements. My delegation considers that force cannot resolve the conflict, but rather will destroy all hope of finding solutions. In that spirit, we call on both Georgia and South Ossetia to exercise restraint, put an immediate end to the military activities, strictly observe the agreement on the non-resumption of hostilities and renew direct talks towards a comprehensive and durable solution to the situation and towards preventing its deterioration.

My delegation commends and supports Russia's efforts to de-escalate the tension by sending envoys to the region to restart the negotiating process aimed at finding a mutually acceptable and peaceful solution to the conflict. We believe that such initiatives are necessary to end the mounting violence and to bring the situation back under control.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia): My delegation would like to join other delegations that have expressed their grave concerns about the latest developments in Georgia, especially with regard to the current heightened tensions and the reported fighting and exchange of heavy fire between Georgian armed forces and the forces of the Georgian region of South Ossetia near the area of Tskhinvali. We note that a number of casualties have been reported on both sides. In that regard, we welcome the call of Georgian President Saakashvili for the bloodshed to end.

Croatia believes that the sides should promptly invest credible efforts to reduce tensions, including with an immediate ceasefire, so as to remove the danger of further escalation. Croatia urges all sides to refrain from any further acts of provocation and would welcome an immediate resumption of negotiations. My delegation is also concerned by reports of volunteers coming from other conflict areas of Georgia, which could have a destabilizing effect and could signal the widening of the conflict.

Croatia would like to take this opportunity to reiterate once again its support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia, which were affirmed in the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1808 (2008).

Finally, Croatia takes note of President Saakashvili's repeated offer, contained in his letter of 7 August 2008 circulated to the Security Council, in support of his peace plan from three years ago that contains almost unrestricted autonomy and local governance for the region of South Ossetia, and would welcome a return to peaceful negotiations within that framework.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): We are deeply concerned by the latest situation in Georgia. The potential for further escalation of violence is real. Almost invariably, such a spiral of violence has serious humanitarian implications for those who are vulnerable. Therefore, much is at stake. My delegation deems it important that a cessation of hostilities be established, and that the parties exercise maximum restraint, including from making inflammatory statements. While recognizing the obvious challenge, it is important that open lines of communication be established between the sides at the highest level and that confidence be established and nurtured.

In the final analysis, there is no substitute for dialogue. That open line of communication must be

coupled with tangible efforts on both sides to end the bloodshed.

At this crucial hour, it is pertinent for the Council to act collectively and in unison in expressing concern and in calling on all sides to exercise maximum restraint, to de-escalate the conflict and violence and to embark on emergency talks in a timely manner. My delegation attaches great importance to the Council's role in managing rapidly evolving crises. We therefore very much regret the fact that, despite obvious common concerns, the Council has yet to express its collective view on this very important issue.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Belgium.

Belgium would like to express its grave concern at the tension prevailing in South Ossetia, Georgia. This tension has already led to the loss of many lives and to a large number of injuries. In the face of this very worrying deterioration of the situation in the region, Belgium calls upon all parties concerned to put an end to military operations and to demonstrate moderation. Belgium calls upon the parties to accept an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and to work, with the help of international community, for a rapid resumption of dialogue.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council. I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Unfortunately, I must note that the statement by the Permanent Representative of Georgia at this evening's meeting included many distortions and contradictions. On the one hand, the representative of Georgia said that the Russian Federation is controlling everything in South Ossetia, but at the same time, he alleged that the Russian military say that they are incapable of controlling the separatists. If Russia has aggressive intentions, as the representative of Georgia alleged today, then why has the Georgian side, over a long period of time, refused to reach an agreement on the non-use of force in the Georgian-South Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, which would protect Georgia against any attempt to use force by anyone at all. From listening to the Permanent Representative of Georgia, it might appear that South Ossetian forces are attacking Tbilisi; in fact, as we all know, the situation is quite the contrary.

I would like also to comment on the point that during Security Council's prior consultations today, the Council was unable to work out a clear reaction to today's events and was unable to send an unambiguous message to both parties, primarily Tbilisi, on the need to put an end to violence and on the need to reject the use of force. The reason for the incapacity of the Security Council to develop a clear reaction to these events unfortunately lies in the absence of clear political guidelines among a number of Council members. This has been demonstrated again during this evening's discussion in our open meeting.

Let me comment on another specific point. In fact, I spoke of this in my statement today and it was also heard in the statement by the representative of the United States: that in recent days Moscow and Washington have very much been in contact. It seemed to us that there was a certain mutual understanding with our United States colleagues about the need to take steps which could put an end to the escalation of the conflict. But in her statement today in the Security Council the representative of the United States only once used the word "condemn" — and that was against South Ossetia, for its alleged failure to attend one of the proposed meetings. And yet, they failed to find clear political terms to describe the aggressive actions of Tbilisi and of the Georgian armed forces attempting to invade Tskhinvali.

It is precisely this inconsistency and this vagueness in the political position that are among the main reasons for the critical situation regarding the South Ossetian-Georgian conflict.

Nevertheless, I hope that today's meeting of the Security Council has been useful and that it will be seen by Tbilisi as indicating that the Security Council, one of the leading institutions of the international community, is not prepared to accept the attempts to resolve the long-standing Georgian-South Ossetian conflict through armed aggression.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): Very briefly, I want to reiterate a few issues which were raised by my very respected colleague, Ambassador Churkin. First of all, I probably did not make myself quite clear: I was saying that the Russian side had explained to the Georgian side that they had no control over the South Ossetian regime. That is why things were getting out of

hand. I did not say that the Russians — the Russian security and defence services — really do not have control of the armed forces of the separatist regime. I demonstrated very clearly who are the core decision-makers in the South Ossetian Government — former and current Federal Security Service (FSB) and defence officials — precisely for that reason: for the Council to understand who is really making decisions in Tskhinvali.

On the other issue, I would like to stress that we welcome the cooperation of the Russian Federation and the United States, which is now happening at a high level, to ease the tensions and to de-escalate the situation. That is exactly what Georgia wants and that is exactly what was proposed by President Saakashvili recently — last night — in a televised address. And that is exactly what we are offering our friends at the negotiating table: the State Minister for Conflict Resolution, who was willing to go, and actually went, to Tskhinvali twice to negotiate and who was rejected by the separatist regime, was bringing those same proposals.

So I would close my remarks with the hope that reason will prevail in this situation and that both sides, and the Russian Federation as well, will come to the negotiating table and will resolve this conflict in a peaceful manner.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 2 a.m.